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CHORDS
FROM ALBIREO

CHORDS FROM ALBIREO

BY DANFORD BARNEY

(Author of "Dust of Stars")

With a foreword by

LAWRENCE MASON, Ph.D.

(*Yale University*)

"*That every quest is but a coming home.*"

—*Hooker*

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TO
LAURA DUNHAM BARNEY,
MY MOTHER—
FOR WHAT SHE HAS DONE,
FOR WHAT I HAVE NOT DONE,
THIS BRIEF VOLUME
IS DEDICATED

Thanks are herewith given to the following for permission to reprint certain poems that have already appeared within their pages:

The London Sphere
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FOREWORD

It is a familiar truism that any educated man or woman who cares to make the effort *can* write verses that scan and rhyme correctly, for this is simply a matter of rational intelligence applied to the operation of a set of rules. In a day when this truism has been deplorably abused by so many persons, it is refreshing to turn to a writer whose natural poetic idiom cannot possibly be mistaken for the machine-made product of the mere intelligent will-to-versify. Not that Mr. Barney's every utterance is quintessential poesy, necessarily: but it is, for better or for worse, the utterance of a poet, rather than that of the ordinary educated citizen of the world. I, at any rate, in recording this as my opinion, believe that it will be shared by most discerning readers, and now proceed to ask of those who do not share it a fair consideration of the following reasons for the faith that is in me.

Mr. Barney's poetry, then, is frankly the poetry of feeling, impression, or intuition, adumbrated by image and symbol, as contradistinguished from the poetry of the strictly intellectual processes, working as it were, or at least capable of being worked out, by a logical diagram. It seeks to evoke moods, in a series of spiritual moments, rather than to impart ideas by a sequence of correlated propositions, and accordingly often employs the structureless, ejaculatory phrase of rhapsody in lieu of the strictly grammatical declarative sentence of mundane intercourse. It is thus entirely content to appear inarticulate to the analytical mind, if it can but appeal by a kind of aesthetic telepathy to the sensitive poetic temperament. Let the sympathetic reader accept these premises and freely yield himself to the vague exaltation or strong emotion induced by glowing imagery and noble diction, without endeavoring too rigorously to translate every line into reasoned prose, and he will find himself under the true spell of enchantment which

authentic poetry always casts over its votaries. This method of composition, therefore, which exalts the spirit above the letter, the immediate realization above the mediate understanding, by passionately apprehending more than cool reason ever comprehends, seems to me entirely legitimate in the abstract, even though I must candidly confess that my own critical interest in the theory, and my faith in its validity, are quite independent of my liking or disliking any given specimen of Mr. Barney's work, in the concrete.

Perhaps the citation of a few illustrative poems and passages from this volume will make clearer the particular qualities that I seek to disengage as characteristic of this type of poetry. "Zones," "Fantasy," "Possessions," "Vision," and some other pieces, of course, are lucid and direct enough to satisfy the most orthodox canons, but these are really exceptions to the rule. A typical manifestation of this art of conveying the thrill and inspiration of poetry by logically inadequate means is "Men and Stars": beauty and fervour and vast philosophical issues are here hauntingly suggested, and yet no line-by-line paraphrase in normal speech is possible—or requisite—to me, at least. Similarly I find the closing lines of "Their Yesterday" and "Diametrics" movingly beautiful, in spite of the fact that the earlier stanzas baffle my understanding. Almost every line in "Star" might well drive pedestrian common sense into the irritated protest, "Why? What on earth does this mean?"—and still, to a mood of poetic surrender, the poem as a whole is very effective and affecting. Briefer examples of emotional glamour defying rational literalism are these:

"Prescience of you far away,
With you, will be yesterday."

"Where unexpended sense shall quaff
The choiring beauty of no form,
Or, from its peace, ride as the chaff
Giddy on pinnacles of storm."

"As if the 'scutcheon of Christ's votarist
Were worth the pride of him who caused the blot."

But it is unnecessary to multiply quotations when almost every page affords instances, and I cannot hope to render my conception of this special phase of poetics either more intelligible to the reader or more acceptable, without unduly expanding this preface. One point further, however, should be made in fairness to Mr. Barney, lest, by withholding quotation, I should seem to imply that there are no good lines of the more conventional sort in his work, whereas in reality effects like the following are by no means infrequent:

"When lips unto my lips that press
Shall stir no sense but holiness."

"Where the wind moved as rain, mysteriously."

"The stars were flung as dust in the tree-tops."

Or this fine rebuke to the despair born of disillusionment:

"Because you dreamed you held the best God gave,
Think you God died the moment you awoke?"

The present collection includes the work that Mr. Barney has done since the publication of his first volume, in November, 1916, and hence covers the varied periods before his enlistment, during his service in France, and since his return and discharge. Though there is consequently a considerable diversity in his subject-matter, yet the predominance of a few leading motives or fundamental convictions is noteworthy: we find everywhere an ardent affirmation of the supreme value and eternal sanctity of Beauty, Innocence, and Aspiration—all incarnate or emblemed, apparently, in One delicately veiled Innominata who is repeatedly hymned in a white passion of chivalrous worship. That Mr. Barney does not always rise to the height of these great arguments would be easy to show by pointing out flaws: but this is only to say that his method of

composition, like everything else in this finite world, suffers from the unavoidable defects of its qualities. On the whole, in closing, I can but repeat that the collection seems to me to comprise a number of admirable illustrations of an exceedingly interesting poetic theory.

LAWRENCE MASON.

Yale University,
October, 1919.

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1917

A WOMAN PASSING

Lover of winds! A little while ago
You sang in glamourie across the fields
Down the old road that still leads to a stream,
Casual in its dreamland flow beneath
The over-arch of trees; or did you run
Drunken in splendour by the constant waves,
Breaking their white hearts on the singing sands?
And one day all the holiness of earth
Crept into you, when through the forest blue,
Quiet in passion as cathedral nave,
You stole in other mood of nearer dreams
Over the printless mould until the light
Of heaven led you to a meadow slope
Where you had kissed twin flowers by a stone.
Ah, none was there to make it consecrate,
The yearning wind, this power of love to crave,
To say that wind and sea form but a thread
Of song to hide the dream of dearer hours.
Till, in the fantasy of your unworth,
Your want of wisdom in the things God gave
To hold the strength of winds in governance,
A jester came, acquainted of the world,
To set your heart's austerities at play,
Like as a demon bee may seek the heart
Of the wild flower to drain the living sweet,
Leaving in recompense its deathless sting.
For him you gave the star of womanhood,
Bore, in his image, these beloved twain,

Twin flowers such as you had kissed before,
Sprung from the dust of Beauty's lustral shard,
Broken, you say, in God's own spendthrift hand.

Lover of wine; luxuriant of earth!
Is it the song of wind and rain has ceased,
Or, has the breaking of a dream made dark
The wonder that you ran unheeding towards!
Because you dreamed you held the best God gave,
Think you God died the moment you awoke?
Christ still is Christ, however Beauty fail,
Love ever blind, so Beauty yearn to see.
And all the ecstasy of things achieved,
Through our unuttered sacrifice of pride,
Lives in the singing eyes, the clean, warm lips
Of God's redeemed, and those who first did win.
Another came to you more sanctified,
With prescience of the worship you once held,
Not swift to judge the swiftness of desire,
But hallowed in redemption; not to preach,
Nor pray, yet kindly comrade in your dreams
That were and are and shall be, when you know.
He came in raptured song upon the shard,
Taking the broken facets in his hand
To mould again in all their holiness.
What if the shell be broken, still the pearl,
The rondured vial of life's wine, is found
By many a fisher on the singing sands
To set within some coronet anew.
And still you say this clay is all in all,
Beauty so frail that pride is its defense,

As if the 'scutcheon of Christ's votarist
Were worth the pride of him who caused the blot.
Unwitting that the sacred flame, once known,
Is still alight, hanging full-orbed above,
Shall you believe this draught of earthen cups
One with the clear wine youth once sipped in fire?
Or, shall these flowers know the stain you leave,
Labor in doubt of Beauty ill redeemed,
Untaught of hope because the soul was weak,
So give their honey for a fool's desire?

Lover of God, blind to the love he bore!
Perhaps some dawn shall make this night's desire
A mockery of what you deem it is;
Bringing the wild wind laden with new song
To sweep, as autumn leaves across the snow,
Old fantasies of darker yesterday
Into oblivion, till the broken shard
Must gleam again in re-awakened fire,
Quick with the wine of his translucent cup,
Who stoops to claim his resurrected own.
Perhaps, beyond the hope of tired sense
And all the weary longing in men's hearts,
Another song of winds, and sound of waves,
Breaking their white hearts on the singing sands,
Shall steal adown remembered years to stir
Light in those dim, grey eyes, and warmth of blood
Upon the passionate lips to cry again
Lost verses from the treasury of time.
So may the heart uplift itself in song
Of awes and adorations, clearly sweet,

Cleansed in the sacrament of bleeding hours,
Star-strong against the little voice of fear;
And life, as once you knew it, gleam again
Once in another's eyes before you pass,
Out of the dim and depth of our grey streets,
A naked pilgrim, through the even-song,
Leaving these flowers wistful to the world,
Sentient in that wonder you possessed,
Companion blossoms by the dusty road,
Closing their crimson petals day by day.
Perhaps some new decade shall see a heart
Enter the stillness of their wonted doubt
To catch them in the balance ere they dream
Of all that is, and think what is is just;
A heart that found its courage in denial,
Knowing the difficult pain the greater joy;
And such a heart may yet retain a song,
The lingering smile of children's questioning,
Happy in dreams before earth's hunger came,
Ere they forget, and laugh, and be forgot.

HILL FEVER

(From a mining hospital Southwest)

That door so white
Below the invisible light!
I might have knelt,
Beating winged hands against the immaculate gate
Of Heaven's vaulted dreams,
Crying to lyric singers far within;
"I come, absolved of sin,
Players of God.
Let me but cast the raiment from this mould,
I that have seen and felt
The shadow rose
Fold, to unclose
In fragrant ecstasy insufferable,
Through bitter moons untold!
Ah, cover me from the holy face that gleams
Down the long, naked path of my unrest;
Only this last behest,
Saviour, fling wide, unless—". Ah, God, too late!

Heaven, these walls still creep
In fearful vigil close as a prison keep.
Look where an ant-like figure climbs the trail,
Across that canyon stark,
Unwitting that this mind
Lifts him from humankind.

Old time immutable
Flings on these hills that nod
Impersonate of God
The vasty, hollow silence of the dark.
Strange little seed of things
To keep these fevered eyes upon their Grail!
Quickening miracle of dulled nerves that flings
A wonder iridescence on her hair!
From age to age,
Saviour, thy little wage,
Lifts us subliminal,
And all
The wants of heart and mind that with us cleave,
Too mortal to confess,
Die silent with the fragile lips' impress
Upon the hand that led with holy care,
When twilight set the western torch at eve!

THE EVERLASTING MIRACLE

Think ye this great Madonna ye adore
Knew not fulfilment in that utter sense
Which can alone crown the immortal mind
Or sanctify the earth's eternal fire?
By chance, some saint set tinsel on the star
That led those ancient prophets weary wise
Unto the garden where God's flower bloomed?
Against the poor inheritance of minds
That made tradition waver down these years,
Shall we declare this one eternal law,
Our lasting miracle of major worth,
Exampled in the thread of all that lives,
Flowers and ferns, in bird and beast, as man,
Broken in one lone instance to defy
The Maker's first intention: or, was God
Tricked in the dark of fancy for our creeds?
Lo, lo, poor mummers in your convent minds,
Will ye not sense the anguish of a world
That lingers yet till some predominant soul
Shall prostitute his weakness to be strong,
Forging God's worth anew in vaster truth
Than eyes have witnessed; for the single light
Of consecration burns subliminal
Beyond these weakly candles of our shrine!
Aye, some must cast these shards of travesty
Into the grim of Hell, and clear their hearts
To walk the hills where many Christs have died.

And each shall have a star above his head,
One miracle of hope beyond all pain
Or sorrow to diminish, one sweet source
Wherein the lights and shadows, tears and songs,
Attuned to his by some predestined will
Above all others, holier than prayer,
Linger and brighten, deepen in splendor there,
As chaliced wine in some deep treasury
Heightens in rapture, craving diviner taste.
Or, shall one pluck an acorn from its branch,
Grasping the bitter fruit of cowardice,
If he has seen the apple blossoms sway
In all their hallowed vesture, or has felt
Prescience of birth and life more sanctified
With fragrance petal-borne down hills of Spring?
Nay; time will come when every saint shall bear
The gift of sense perfected in the thirst
Of clear fulfilment, hear, and see, and touch,
Until delight of graver ecstasies
Garner the immortalities of earth.
So, harmony of many instruments
In poignant overture must raise the thought
In universal theme beyond the sense
Of this our every day, until the years
Spin to the heaven's planetary tune,
Beyond the casual dreamer's power to hold
The greater vision in his common life.
So parchments are with ink invisible,
Unseen because thereon are words unlike
The usual barter of our daily tongues,
Dreams far beyond the covenants of fools,

The inarticulate sessions of lone minds;
Only upon the endeavored ways of light,
Some luminary star may sink deep, deep,
Within the watchful precincts, lingering on
The dying parchment, and the words leap up
In warmth of rapture to some full-voiced song,
Sweeter than sorrow, assured in holiness.
Even has beauty been arrayed in pain
Ere the white rose turned crimson in the night.
Behold that face still looms a shadowy form,
Those singing lips yet lift their faithful song,
As minor dominant of men's dying dream,
And major resurrection!

CONFESSION

Must I lay bare the fallacy of lips
That cry me down the night and day to haunt
My ears with idle condemnation thus:
"Behold this dreamer prostitutes his creed,
"That claims whereof is beauty there is strength,
"And here his spirit wanes for want of flesh!"
Ah, little worshippers of common sense,
Unwitting the extraordinary height
Of souls forever mutual in this clay,
Sense unto sense till all divinity
Distils the earth's fulfilment. Only here,
Within this kingdom where affections rule,
Shall minds gleam forth incarnate with the wine
Of holy chalice whence two hearts have sipped.

Dear Heart, I leave the morning of your face
To meet the stalwart thoughts of men beyond,
To consecrate all Beauty in the acts
Of humble striving and the gloried play
Of multitudes along their myriad paths,
Lauding the strong, setting the weak with power,
For I am you, and you go forth in me,
Each in his own fit manner till the war
Of each long day must end in weary peace.
Then to the chalice of the moil's spent wine,
The resurrection of expended hours,
I shall return to fill the cup again,
To sleep within the twilight of your eyes.

BEAUTY

Strangely that face must haunt me as a star!
Ah, Bride who sought in pain your master Love,
Beauty, I know you as you were and are
And will be when this pulse has ceased to move.

You that first stirred Love's seedling in the womb
Mould us to die; your prescience that each sips
Lives in the flower still-born upon the tomb
To draw your quickened song from redder lips.

The coming man grows gradual in your power,
That once revealed in aftermath of pain;
One torch of hope to light each barren hour,
Our dreams forgone for what we can attain.

You the Eternal; and we but quest in brief;
Find you in color, form, familiar songs.
Our little faith makes melody of grief,
Craving in you what least to each belongs.

Somewhere, to-day, the little cloud slips drift
Flaming adown the twilight stream of rest.
One line of blue amid the white makes rift,
As delicate vein across a mother's breast.

Here, in the moil yon gothic symbol stands
Protest against the day's more gross desire,
Reaching in prayer of many labored hands
The spirit finger of its dark limned spire.

The gamin's song along the dirty street
Wakens atremble down the city night,
Against the least dim sounds of weary feet,—
The finite yearning towards the infinite.

THE DEAD TO WAKE

It were not easy for the dead to wake,
Or that we dream such dreams as never break;
Yet Beauty steals upon our vestured sleep
In sweet surrender for another's sake.

It were not easy for the dead to rise,
Or that the Lowlands hear the Mountain cries;
Yet Beauty walks immortal in desire,
To crown the shadows after sunset dies.

Children pass on with unillumined eyes,
As twilight flowers close their lips with sighs;
Or some hand plucks one from its barren field,
In resurrection infinitely wise.

The warp of sorrow in the threads of rain
Binds the night loom, till in and out again
Swift Beauty's shuttle cleaves the web of doubt,
Weaving the dawn exquisite in its pain.

HOW GLAD TO KNOW

How glad to know that such as you may rise
Beyond the near horizon of young dream,
Stealing into one's heart as radiant gleam
Of kindly star through children's paradise!

So, in the bondage of men's idle wrong
The caged bird does not stir,
Until, amid the shadows of its doubt,
Prescience of understanding from without,
And some wise comforter
Gathers the little courage of its song.

So, April steals among the silent trees
Under the sleep of Winter days
Seeking the intimate heart of springs
Whereat she sets her lips upon
The frozen surface, and their new warmth frees
The inner life and miracle of things,
In deep reflection, as it bubbles on
Its singing ways.

How glad to know
That in this consecrated place,
Happy for its release,
Howe'er the many streams may flow,
Howe'er you wander for a little space
Over the field and hill,
This spring shall babble on and will,
In sunlight or in rain
Should you return again,
Be singing still
In consecrated peace!

WOMAN'S SONG

If we give thanks for any gain of war,
  Let mine be only this,
Throughout the cloud there shone one instant star,
  All that is mine was for a moment his.

If thanks be meet, let this fulfil my prayer,
  One gleam of old lang syne,
That joy of earth and sea, the light and air,
  Distilled in him were for a moment mine.

Now though he walk elsewhere nor come again,
  My way is ever ours;
He shall be mine, unwitting, and my pain
  Shadow new revelation of his powers.

DIAMETRICS

Only, beyond this night
Purple hours of pain
Steep in the mad unrest;
All that I gave, to earn
Your soul, must needs return
Sweet with the unpossessed,
Tremble and rise again,
Blinding the dawn in light.

Once we were one and one,
Leaves that had flown astray
Through hours of lingering sweet;
Minims of humankind,
Blown before gorgeous wind,
Separate only to meet
Somewhere to dance and play,
Children beneath the sun.

Isles of the changing light;
Shadows that creep the hill;
Sharp trees against the sky;
Seas on a broken shore
Haunting you evermore
Follow your path, and I
Scatter my dreams, and still
Garner the facets bright.

Life was your sacrament,
Faith in a world unwise,
Joy, not knowing why.
Yet through the wind and rain
You shall return again,
Seeking inconstantly
Rest for your tired eyes,
Peace and a strange content.

All that is touched and seen,
Beauty of all possessed,
Keep you in ecstasy,
Howe'er we ever meet
Smiling, to pass and greet,
Something eternally
Out of the endless quest
Runs ever dark between.

E'en though the gods of old,
Dreams of their vestal fire,
Lead you to still your pain;
Out of your world absorbed,
Into my world, full-orbed
Your face shall gleam again;
Memory shall make desire
All that the heart can hold.

MASSES

Over the silences of time,
Beating incessantly on every hand
These soundless voices, crying thus,
As the far drone of many bees
Or ebb and flow of many peopled seas
Weaving their sleepless ire,
Would seem to storm the last redoubt of thought
As if they sought
To quench our one eternal fire,
Crying, "Come down to us;
Or tell us this we may not understand!"
Over the silences of time.

FRANCE

MEN AND STARS

It's all a master symphony, a glad sad song
Of sunshine and sorrow as footsteps march along
Adown the ways of magic
Through happy and the tragic
Sorrow-laden hours of God's eternal plan;
We that are but shadows
Across the litten meadows,
As flowers, bloom to vanish beyond the endless span.

It's all a master symphony, and every act or dream
Only a minor dominant within the major theme.
Faith in every sorrow
Gleams of a tomorrow,
Light that shadows borrow from cradle to the tomb;
Gain in each achieving,
Loss beyond retrieving,
Are one within the weaving upon a greater loom.

It's all a martial symphony; each marching to his war
Passes in transcendent gleam of his o'erarching star,
Throughout the greater yearning
Within our orbits turning,
Still as the stars are burning beyond where planets roam.
Divine, our deep desire
Flames in the tongueless choir,
The everlasting regiments forever coming home.

THE MAJOR PARADOX

(France: 1917-1919)

We have claimed one God, but to worship makers
and masters of men;
Taken of one Communion, proven the dual mind.
We have tuned our harp of sorrow; suffered to
laugh again;
We have reckoned a nation's honor in barter of
mankind.

Where is the forfeit levied, whose is the bargain
won,
When saints are given for dust, hearts for a penny
sold?
I have seen a mother sorrow for one of her breeding
gone;
Yet we send our sons in prowess to mimic the
Christ of old!

We, who claim God in common, shall we be fools at
best,
When two strong men in common seek that the
other die?
Oh, all ye that are weary, will ye give all for rest,
Say that belief is a shadow, Christ but a living lie?

Fear, that had made us holy, has broken our faith
at last.

Whose in the world's affliction to sever the right
from wrong?
We have scattered the broken bread, spreading the
red repast,
Singing each of our sorrow, and there are no words
for the song.

We have lifted the cup in vengeance to find it a
bitter wine;
They that have sipped shall madden, drinking for-
ever deep,
Till the chosen shall be united in dream of a
common sign,
In sleep, and a little slumber, and a folding of
hands in sleep.

We have broken the lasting creed, to sanction a
compromise
With Him who has cried, "I come not to destroy,
but to fulfil!"
Yet whose is the gift to sanction; whose shall be
Paradise,
That have torn for their many banners the raiment
of His will?

What is this doubt you gave us to flame in the eyes
of youth,
We that are God-inspired, one in the living breath?
Bound in our petty trials, one in the infinite Truth,
Shall we sow sin in hatred, reaping the wage in
death?

The guns of the world may storm, yet the sun must
rise again
Over the broken shards, throughout the hours of
grief.
Others shall fill the ranks where the lines of smiling
men
Marched as shadows away in the wonder of dark
belief.

The world swings on in its orbit to one predestined
end,
Unsullied in its purpose, howe'er we mourn for
peace.
It is only men's desire and doubt we have to amend,
When those who have gone are sleeping, and those
who are watching cease.

ON A ROSE

(Received in sick-bed)

Would that the passion and the power
Of beauty in this passing flower
Breathe in a living world again!
Would that the last tolled hour arrive,
When only the leaf fall as the tear,
Till in the Spring of gladder year
Our children's children bloom alive,
And hearthstones moan "Amen."

Would that the hand in hand of friends
Serve to the nations for amends
To bring faith unto men.
Ah, may we in this shadowed hour,
When souls are swept as chaff away,
And strong men gone of yesterday,
Keep fragrance with this blood-stained flower,
And murmur its "Amen."

Exquisite rose, the wage of sin
Which this poor planet labors in,
Your beauty shall not ken.
Your dimmed tracery near my bed,
Rises with her, the living ghost
Of some madonna in the host
Of merciful who break God's bread,
And whisper my "Amen."

BLESSÉ

He's got little chance
To finish the dance,
  That chap lying there?
'Twill do him no good
To waste all the blood;
  They got him for fair.
Watch that—did he gulp?
Just a mass of new pulp.
  Are you sure he's not dead?
Dead? No—don't be sure
What the flesh shall endure;
  He'll come back on the bed.

Just a history of fracture;
We'll soon manufacture
  A man from the mass;
For a space, like as not;
Yet how long, and for what,
  But the hour's broken glass?
To breathe or to think
In the mind's life and blink,
  Without limb, without sight;
Be it life, though it seem
'Twere no heaven to dream
  Without stars in the night.

BLESSÉ

So they're patching him up
That he may lift the cup
  Of life's wine again;
That he may lie aware,
In the touch of the air,
  Of the horror of pain;
Till in some tired year
To re-vision the fear
  As in hell-mouth before,
The flesh on the rack,
The coin God tossed back,
  Death tapping the door.

VESTAL

Friend, you shall let the candle burn
As it always did in the great room.
How happily did we discern
Those weird suggestions through the gloom,
Glad ghosts to meet on our return
From ghastlier figures in this tomb.

For peace will come, as evening dim
Creeps soundless down the valley floor.
Our hearts will raise their vesper hymn
When dusk comes weeping at the door,
And clouds sleep on the earth's grey rim.
We'll talk of life we lived before.

And where the olden stars were lit,
And carrion hawks flew down to sup
Upon the needless blood, or flit
About the dead to lick it up,
Within the candle gloom we'll sit
Once more to lift the passionate cup.

IN HIS NAME

(December, 1918)

Where is the day our band set sail
  Heroic in our glees,
Hull down upon a darkling trail
  Across cold leagues of seas?
And laughed upon the dearer lot
We left in yon fair garden spot
  For graver destinies?

Oh, do they still touch home, those ships,
  And do they know we say
Another prayer than crossed our lips
  That glorious yesterday?
Or is it that we are forgot,
To live as meaner souls have not,
  Forever and for aye?

"We go to wash the Saviour's feet,"
  Those last words to a friend!
Do men betray, and God see meet,
  Their purport to an end?
Or is it that some master mind
Barters with God in humankind?
  Or is poor Christ deceit?

He sought to prove our truth disgrace;
  These do as menials must;
Authority! Look on its face,
  And say if there be lust.
Disciples of the swineherd plan,
Weep not the calvary of man,
  Nor men that lived as dust!

Five seasons saw the moon careen,
  Dead light of our desire,
From Metz to vestured Limousine,
  And wane upon its gyre.
We builded till the striven sweat
Was cold upon our limbs and wet,
  And souls died down like fire.

There was a castle in our dream.
  The chosen few of men
Within a city raised the scheme
  According to his pen;
Yet emperors seemed to care no whit,
And so the serfs fulfilled their bit,
  And tore it down again.

But lo, we raised it on a hill,
  Through peril, toil, and pain,
Patrolled its canvas white and still,
  In sun, or wind, or rain;
Until some king provoked distress
With staring at its usefulness;
  We razed it down again.

IN HIS NAME

Where is the day we sealed our word,
  Our aims thrice sanctified?
Let us not stand, dear Lord, unheard,
  That for our life has died!
Barren in war, ah, is it peace,
Or sterile prayer of our release,
  Or for our death, he lied?

Oh, do they still touch home, those ships,
  Their branded cargoes charred;
Or bear the burden of our lips,
  From revelation barred?
Oh, vestals of our dim return,
Shall the warm intimate fires burn,
  To mend the broken shard!

IMMORTALITY

Dear, should I go blindfolded to my sleep,
To set my name upon the scroll of years,
Let not your breast be restless with the deep
Dark lingering impulse of persuasive tears.
We have not fed upon the purloined dreams
Of little mortals in their martyrdom;
So, when the river of the unknown streams
Over my inert sense you shall become
A flaming sculpture of the outlived past,
Graven immortal in the fading mind;
Know only this, the mirrored form can last
Only within the space of humankind.
Yet, o'er the ashes still some flame divine
Burns as a night watch o'er the form supine.

COMRADES

(From a hospital, France, 1917)

We played at comrades, you and I,
Chance made me pawn and you the queen,
And we debated earnestly
How things that were not might have been.

We marched adown the gold paved way,
We held our state in royal halls,
As though the earth's imperial sway
Were bounded by these naked walls.

Till, ever in your wise concern,
My weakness served your kinder will
That watched the fevered taper burn,
And slaved to keep it burning still.

You smiled by lamplight at the trace
Of child-surrender on the deep
Serenity of my wan face,
The immortality of sleep.

And once we harkened at the rain
Throughout the long companioned night,
Till dawn crept to the window pane,
And touched the walls with timid light.

'Tis strange the lot that haunts me still;
That I should fail my part despite
The power to guide the flesh by will;
That you should stand my watch by night.

But hours of forfeit shall reward
Who, by their chance, must watch and wait;
So first within this prisoned ward
I touched your hand upon the gate.

If we hereafter may not meet,
You will be strong, nor grieve too much,
Knowing each faithful hand I greet
Stirs with the spirit of your touch.

Just as in petals of faded flowers,
A beauty haunts there without end,
As perfume through the wasting hours,
The memory lingers of a friend.

In other land, perhaps you'll tell
Some dearer friend, whose faith you try,
"There's fragrance in old flowers"—Ah, well,
We played at comrades, you and I!

ZONES

Far, far away; and yet not very far,
There still is sweetness in an open land;
There Beauty lingers as the luminous star
Through a dark room. Ah once, we hand in hand
Watched the deep hours deepen in the fire,
The bright day over with the peace of night;
And the close lips, the mystery of desire
Unfolded, fragile in the embered light.
But here the ceaseless murmur of old men,
Toiling the night shift down a filthy alley,
Burdens our sleep, stings memory again
With sough of trees along a windy valley.
And I seek Thee, alone, in wanton faces,
Where the dumb crosses bleach the desolate places.

BY A TUSCAN RUIN

A mad wind in a black, gnarled tree
Sings forever its old world tune;
Across a dead and lichened wall,
By fitful gleamings of the moon,
The blind storm draws continual,
Unconsciously, its bitter rune,
The silent masque of history.

Deep in this nook, one new desire
Lifts in the heart of this wild flower,
Crying of worlds beyond this death;
Untrammelled by this jaundiced power,
Somewhere new children still draw breath;
Somewhere throughout the tired hour
Sweet faces gleam around a fire.

HUMOR

(Shock-room, advance Field Hospital)

Aug. 17, 1918.

If you should hear I lay a broken mass,
Do not seek out to find me where I lie;
Withdraw the cover; snap the lip-stained glass;
Maturer councils have ordained we die.

Belovéd, turn your face to whence you came.
For I have seen the dead lad where he lay;
And you would never know me for the same,
Nor I know him in any other way.

We love the accustomed form on which we look.
The perfect vessel holds our full content,
But broken, only sterner lives shall brook
The ghastlier limbs, our gross disfigurement.

Beyond all hope, beyond all tangent sense,
He came to us. Our hands were good as tied.
We were but glad he held one recompense,
Knowing he knew not if he lived or died.

The gaped blue lips, that stirred perhaps a lover's,
Moveless were thick with blood-black sputtering.
Chance plays grotesque its dice. A night-moth hovers
At the wick's end, the last blind guttering.

A soldier entered, scraped his feet; the door
Slammed. He did not know we three were there,
Until he tripped, caught himself up, and swore.
The situation caught him unaware.

Confusion made him seem the more alive.
It was a common thing to have men die.
'Twould take an awkward dogma to contrive
A grave face in such paradox, so I

Laughed quietly in the dawn that broached this
dying.
Judge slowly lest you know not what you do,
(With there a woman by the stretcher crying)
Saying which be the holier of the two.

Beware fool's pity for what has to be;
Laughter's more sweet than mirth, when wisdom
clears
The reason for our soul's eternity,
Deeper than prayer, too terrible for tears.

MUSIC

(From a hill, May, 1918)

A band is playing down below in the street,
  Waking the dirty village from the still
Deathly vale where moon and the hill-shades meet,
  Fearfully poignant under the dark of the hill,
Terribly sweet, ay, and a bit too sweet.

Hark, the bugle notes to their startled wings
  Flutter unseen, shiver along the hills,
Die in the vale; now, the old melody swings
  Time to the weary heart, as sweetness thrills
Over God's finger-board and tautens the strings.

A dream-girl came tonight from over the sea
  To sing the road for dusty tattered fellows;
God! for the music that wanders eternally!
  Lithe swift body, sweet of the eyes that mellows
Trodden turf to blossoms of memory.

Premonition of death in darkness sleeping;
  Then the trilled bugle's dance below the hill;
Beyond the hill, the same dumb figures creeping
  Over the land of no-man, watching still,
As that woman somewhere down the dusk weeping.

Surging, feeling out of the numb of sleep,
  Miracle melody yearning along the hill
Breaks as a wave—drum taps—last, the deep
  Longing over the night, the mind hears still
The song foregone, the swing of the planets' reap.

Will dreams fester when our song is done?
  We'll mind not that! A cloud is bringing rains
Across the moon—all past and present gone;
  Yet the rumbly squeak of unseen wagon trains
Keeps with the frogs their stupid monotone.

THEIR YESTERDAY

(Apremont, Sept. 11, 1918)

When the last effort has sufficed
All but man's image to erase,
And worshippers of Eve or Christ
Leave but their crosses to efface.

O, it will not be hard to pass
Where centuries are not so long,
Unmirrored in the broken glass,
Still quick where memory is strong.

Only the kinder few will note
A cross upon the records where,
Invisible, His swift hand wrote
My name in the perennial quair.

A few these remnants shall enfold,
Official in their decorous way.
Forgetting ere the earth be old
They laid me with their yesterday.

Their yesterday and my tomorrow
To wing and with the meteor climb
Whence stronger faith or pity borrow
The mastery of our sublime;

Where unexpended sense shall quaff
The choiring beauty of no form,

Or from its peace ride as the chaff
Giddy on pinnacles of storm,

While dynasties of old disdain
Kneel unto democratic hate,
And summer moons through veils of pain
Rise poppy-red and passionate,

They'll hear trees tip-toe on the hill,
The winnowing of hands o'erhead,
And know the elemental will
Reaps on the highways of the dead.

And something in their sleep shall stir;
Insensate things shall move and seem
Burnished beneath His scimitar;
And common things become as dream.

You'll know when first the amber star
Creeps down the intimate stair of night;
Oh, Heart, still moves your avatar
From life to death, from death to light.

You'll hear old laughter down the gloom
Of twilight hills when day is done,
Still foot-falls through the poppy bloom;
When you shall know that I have gone.

Gone, and the dust of flesh is spent,
And error dead, and God but true;
Oh, Heart, the dawn of that ascent
To all eternity with you!

FINALE

(Chaillon: Nov. 10th, 1918)

There is an end, I knew it must be so,
An end with the dissolving of mad tears,
When all the blinded eyes must see anew
The olden ways adorned in ecstasy.
Oh, Figure of our long imprisoned hours,
Shall you be waiting, kindly as of yore,
Kindly and wise to long enduring hurt
That may not speak nor yet be understood,
When we return, oh, to yon paradise?
And dim winds murmur down the lonesome valley,
Hazy with summer noons, and western light;
And music from the throat of arbored birds;
And lazy hum of drowsy crawling things
Warm with uncountered rest; oh, above all,
The sullen beat of seas beyond the hill,
Deep with gigantic distance, sad with faith
Eternal and eternal as their tides;
These and the everlasting shall we find,
Free limbed and these lips free of false denials,
To flout the passionate gales, to whisper tales
At twilight, sing and chatter with the world.
"Beauty of woman, comrade, earth and sea,"
God, that the mind should ever have conceived
Such benisons to make and break in dreams,
Dreams ill-begotten in these far stark fields.

Beauty of God, yea, it must come again,
Since words we sought to say for comrades' sake
Were bartered by the faithless and we lost
The little vestige of the truth we were.
And those who wore authority to scourge,
And took their pride to doubt our holy hours,
Shall come to knock upon the outer gate
To beg admittance—glad, immaculate Heart,
It shall be yours to resurrect these dead,
With yours the everlasting constancy;
Ever the eyes in which you set the fire
Immortal from the travesty of war.
And we'll go down the sweet familiar lanes
Of eager faces as we went before,
Taking the reed these lesser sought to break,
Go down old lanes, or by new hearth fires pipe
To weary children ditties of new lore.

1919

DOLORES

I

I found you in the eyes along old streets
Facets of the first star one can't forget,
Those living dead whom one forever meets,
Shadows of a perfection we have met.
And it is not luxuriance I ask;
I slept in mire and mud, on dirty floors,
Yet to return unto this beggar's task,
Continual knocking at the myriad doors;
You had not spoken of it as I went
Half certain in the glamour, nor cared much
How in the last mad fury life was spent,
Only, you came and I stirred at your touch,
And, at your word, went down the road alone;
But that long since, and now you too have gone.

II

Strange spirit-eyed, will you not keep the sense
Of what we can be from the thing we are,
Finding in loss the constant recompense,
Throughout the dark a still prevailing star?
You, for the faith in whom, these went and died
In fields forgotten, will you hold at naught
The faithful remnant to be crucified,
Choke the last breath for which as dogs these fought?
As from the fever of some hideous sleep,
Like broken shadows of victorious night,
These bloody heads and hearts in memory creep
Back to the resurrection of your light;
Oh, Heart, all wise; yours too the fragile pain,
To build the fires for mastery again!

PHILANDERER

You tell me I waste my powers,
  Then, what will you have done,
When the dim tolling hours
  Beat quickstep to our sun?

If the sand of the running hours
  Is filling the lower glass,
Will you count the petalled flowers
  To tell the hours that pass?

I am the will and the way,
  Chalice of unspent wine;
What if another must pay
  To drink of what is mine?

Years to come shall they think
  To knock at another's door,
With him unwitting drink
  Of me, as you drank before.

I am the shade and the light
  Laughter and tear in their song,
Reaping the glory of right
  Sowed in the knowledge of wrong.

Cry of the world in sadness
  Only an echo of me;
Child's soft laughter in gladness
  My immortality.

Heart of a woman is song,
  Love in the last is right;
Yearning that knows no wrong
  Shall never have seen the light.

Mine is but to have striven
  For gift of the soul in seeing
That beauty of heart is given
  Alone by virtue of being.

FORGOTTEN LOVER

Oh, what is that stark tree out yonder doing,
Doomed to outlive our days a century?
So, having loved long since, eternally
Irresistible in its futile wooing?

They say it is the wind or anything
They do not know about that stirs the trees,
A gale or hurricane or just a breeze,
A glimmering breath of what we each call Spring.

And yet each year I hear it said by some,
There climb to deck new leaves upon the tree—
And in their task move branches terribly—
The ghosts of children past and years to come.

Only it must be mockery of our Spring
Lovers and loved departed thus to see,
Keeping their foolish songs in treasury,
Immortal and impossible to sing.

Dumb limbs transfigured in the endless quest;
You image of youth dead, and so of me,
Laugh! That the myriad love shall endlessly
Seek to embrace and never, never rest.

FAITH

If all the beauty in the world
Merged with the darkness there and fell
Clattering down the stair of night,
I'd laugh into the face of Hell,
And mock that Beauty seemed in flight.

For I should know, as you would know
The gladness in the face of men
But facet and the afterglow
Of olden Beauty come again;

And all our laughter and our tears,
The blush upon the cheek that grows,
Music of immemorial years,
Bloom of the immemorial rose;

And darkness but the clouds that pass;
The stair of night but moonbeam falling;
Beauty the lover and his lass
Each to the other ever calling.

FANTASY

Although a guest,
I left, alone, and quietly closed the door
Upon the rest.
I did not care, nor thought to see them more
Upon this quest,

Thinking to greet,
Beyond the decent hills and glad horizon,
Down endless street,
The form of dreams our waking ne'er set eyes on,
Only to meet

Her I once met,
The lone madonna with the eyes of pain
Sweet with regret;
Men seek forever, never find again,
Nor can forget.

UPON THE PIPER

Oh, elders, wherefore have ye done?
  Wipe not your bigot eyes;
That this wan man of red and brown
Turned his sweet face on Hamlin town
To pipe the blessed children down
  The vale of Paradise.

Still he sings of the bitter sands
  Washed by a restless sea,
Of a man of men long years ago
And a valiant band who loved him so
They followed as he was wont to go
  By the shores of Galilee.

His flute was as the northern winds
  That flout the Norsemen's ire;
He touched the stops in nimble art,
Playing each part and counterpart,
Till chords sang as a broken heart
  With pain of sweet desire.

Little faith, oh, little faith
  Beyond the hills of doom!
Ye fat and lean who dance around
Till ye lie prostrate on the ground,
Will ye not hear the fluted sound,
  Aye, quickening of your tomb?

Broken hearts and broken hearts,
  Know ye not your desire?
A paltry sacrifice, to see
That Hamlin stands by Galilee,
Whose children's immortality
  Breathes a diviner fire.

GENERATIONS

When you are old and I am old
And embers of the heart grow cold,
Or lips unto my lips that press
Shall stir no sense but holiness
Of other dreams in other hours
Where seeds we sowed sprang brighter flowers;
And from the ashes of our fire
Uprose new figures in desire;
After the best and worst we live,
We'll hold the single gift; to give—
Keep requiem with our yesterday,
And kneel upon our stones to pray:

"Child of the sun, and wind, and rain,
Child of the Springtide come again,
Our gift be given that you shall know,
Before the bud to blossom grow,
The sense of joys that might have been
Renders the joy, that was, more keen;
That men forever by their creed
Must hound the phantom of their need,
Out of the din and dirt of toil,
The traffic and the trade of moil,
Return to dream at the day's end,
Yet know not in what way to spend
The glitter that they labored for,
So restless fare to seek the more;
Till, in our broken age we find

The veriest of humankind
Ephemerids of a Master mind;
And all our grave philosophy
Man's measure of God's destiny;
And Truth but the unspoken word
Determined ere the first seed stirred;
He, above all, will understand
The two He fondles in His hand,
And we, these two, before His face
Dare venture to our own disgrace
That lips express a better way
Of things, too beautiful to say.
Child of the sun, or wind, or rain,
Child of that beauty born of pain,
Yours be our immortality,
Our gift your vision that you see
To laugh on age, nor be afraid
At passion as a tune outplayed."

What though your forehead graven grow,
I shall still watch the afterglow
Of the eternal virgin star,
Knowing the purest light we are
In strength of laughter at our grief,
In mockery of diverse belief,
But shadow of some gleam afar.

LITTLE FEET

Little feet, little feet
Roaming on the star-lit street,
Benison of God, your faith
In your moon-begotten wraith,
Centuries and centuries
Roll beneath your destinies,
Destinies you never know
Till the lilies crimson blow.
Do you ever dream before
You tap and enter at the door,
Of the sadly grosser things
That shatter men's imaginings?

Still the little voices rise;
Out of the city chaos, cries.
Hunger, and thirst in silence dies,
Spawn of the gloried infamies.
And so you say it must go on
Ah, well, my son,
Ask of some wiser master of the law
What Sparta saw
Her citadels of fibre hung upon.
And then return;
Tell me the one privilege we hold
By magic paramount,
Is live and love and laugh and drink and sing,
And then waste-weary just forget the thing,
But leave to future debtors full account

Of which they know not, nor can pay
But as inheritors of yesterday,
Today's eternal failures manifold.
And then return,
Tell me the wage and way of humankind
Is always such;
And no one will care much
For miracles and others,
But will live swiftly and then leave behind
Their debt to earth's new brothers.
You think we live and die
In our own pleasant infamy?
There are no others
Foreseeing the joy of kind?
Poor fool, I say you lie;
You'll see—but, never mind.

Little feet, little feet,
Running down the star-lit street;
Perfection but to make your dream
The verity that it should seem;
Drowsy heads around the fire,
Drowsy lips that sing desire;
Wait till we prepare to bless
Your miracle of holiness.
Prescience of you far away,
With you will be yesterday;
Little feet, little feet,
'Twill be different when we meet.

BREATH

As I lie in the grass
Beneath the summer sky,
Watching the clouds that pass,
I wonder what hope, if I

Suddenly vanish away?
If what men took me for,
Except as the light of day,
Came among friends no more?

Still I would come and go,
The breath of what was I,
Play with the to and fro,
And hover quite tranquilly

Over the grass and flowers
Where I had lain before,
Days and years and hours
Nothing but evermore.

BY THE SEA

BEATA DIE

Within the first beginning,
  Transfiguring belief,
Impossible of sinning,
  Incredible of grief,
The perfect God who bore you
  In pain that makes aright,
In perfect vision saw you,
  To fashion you of light;
Chose from the purest leaven
  The seed whence you are made,
To blossom in man's heaven,
  Exquisitely portrayed.

Light in the deep affliction,
  Finding all gladness good,
Worst in the Crucifixion
  The best they understood;
One above many mortals,
  Now come you in His name
White flame against our portals
  As once of old He came;
Proud in the youth of yearning,
  Queen of your infinite task,
Courage of fearful learning,
  Mother of all we ask.

Not for your utter measure,
  Nor that which you are not,

Not for the pain of pleasure,
  Which may not be forgot;
Nor lips that might have spoken
  Of beauty after pain;
Not for the shard that broken
  Shall never mend again;
But dreams of truth that flourish
  Reborn, we kneel today;
The flowers men shall nourish
  In Gethsemane for aye.

Over the sunlit pages
  Another hour has tolled;
We gather the hopes of ages
  Into the evening fold
For brighter dawns tomorrow,
  Beautiful as you go
In raiment that we borrow
  To hide the tears that flow;
Taking strength of your trial,
  Safe through the flood and fire,
Courage from your denial,
  Cool in the deep desire.

Adown the way unending,
  Through gardens understood,
As twilight lilies bending
  Deepen in motherhood;
And who shall watch, nor dreaming,
  The tremor of your lips,
Sacred beyond all seeming,

Nor feel the heart's eclipse,
In little hands that reaching
Span the mysterious years,
Or little lips beseeching
Between their doubts and fears.

You in the wine life christens,
Wine that was blood before,
Is it the deep heart listens
Where the great gods implore?
'Ware lest the little scorners
Lead you within their past;
Watch lest pity give mourners
A soul for their pennies cast;
Child of our infinite being,
Shall it be yea or nay;
Beauty beyond all seeing,
Love beyond all men say!

You shall uplift their banner;
Falter it not, nor sway,
Knowing in your own manner
The earth's more common way,
After you legions surging,
Faces uplift to the sky,
Out of the years emerging
Glad in your name to die;
Beware, not swift to render
Yours, as a thing too dear;
Beauty ordains in splendour
Love in its intimate fear.

What time the pagans started,
We bore indeed your lance,
And went as broken-hearted
To play at death with France;
Returned again in wonder
To olden shores at last,
Here in the twilight ponder
Upon the darkling past;
Ponder and ask if ever
Dawn from our darkness rise;
Is it the years can sever
Hell from our Paradise?

Lo, through the devious ranging
Still flares the former light,
The way and will unchanging,
Still weary after flight,
But, oh, through fearful winding
Through death for what it bought,
The glory of the finding
The heart forever sought!
The face we first set eyes on,
For which, in peace, it seems
We sit behind horizon
To play at life with dreams!

So is it willed, Madonna,
You for the soul you are;
Man with his way in honor;
The child with his vagrant star.
Whatever, as men, we name you,

Year unto dying year,
However dust may claim you,
Vision shall persevere.
However the present perish,
As ever realities do,
Children to be shall cherish
Truth as a part of you.

You in the thing you make it,
Eternal or not to be;
Beauty for what you take it
As life in its entity;
Heart of the purer passion;
Eyes of the kindlier rest;
Love in its dearer fashion;
Peace in the myriad quest,
Worship we unto the last,
Poor as our dumb lips pray;
Future and present and past,
Distilled in the one today.

September 19th.

MINOR DOMINANTS

Through the myriad hopes and failures, vagrant of
a common earth,
Do you ask the song that led me to the heart of
Arcady,
To the glory out of sadness, sorrow that betrays our
mirth,
Lady of the wind and stars and all unspoken things
to me?

Would these know the pain that swept me as I've
watched the faintest gesture
Hiding all your heart sang with the sea along its
coral bars?
Watched the twilight raiment fall across the wonder
of your vesture,
Woven of star-revery that dreams bring nearer
than the stars?

Through the lone recessionals of time the song of
songs is one,
One immortal thing the winds have whispered in
the years between,
Saying lips of courage cease not once the symphony
begun;
Men are naught in the eternal; faith is what we
have not seen!

Though I gather from the sheaves the songs men
ever sang before,

Rises still against their voices but the one and living
theme,
That I found the old sea singing, feeling round its
myriad shore,
Beating as a lost heart keeping harmony with its
one dream.

I have hidden in the darkness, but through darkness
silence strays,
All the silence that but echoes dreams that are not,
yet may be,
Sets the weary heart to singing the old song that
ever says
All the dearer things unspoken that you ever meant
to me.

What of all the nearer sweetness if it linger on in
pain;
What of all the songs of laughter if thereafter cry-
ing brings
Drifting down the purple pinewoods as a melody
again,
Haunts a hallowed place deserted where the lone
earth-mother sings.

Is it but the fever vision of a heart weak after fight,
Pale as dead desire that wakens to its immortality;
Worship of a dog whose eyes by some old faith are
kept alight,
Knowing not the sail shall never lift against the sky
at sea?

As a treasury of Eden, will you in the dusk remember
The one flower of his garden, radiant in its place alone;
Shall it gleam upon another's hearth as fire gone to ember,
When I pass the lighted inns along the starlit highways gone?

STAR

Out of the night,
Out of the pall of mist
Gradual and half timidly you came,
As variant amethyst
Slowly refulgent in its myriad light
Orbs into being; the face that has no name,
The strange lips smiling scarlet as a wound,
Tears brimming the grey eyes,
And essence of wind's tremor in your hair;
From somewhere music flows, yet without sound,
As the continual urge that underlies
Some lost fulfilment that we did not dare.
And, lo, you fade
While moments of the self rise to deceive
And stand between
The eyes and what they saw,
As flesh will intervene
Betwixt our purpose and what we achieve,
Yet would adore.
But, lo, again you rise
Like the dim aria of all constant prayer,
And in your eyes
Shadow of this infinite Truth you are,
Translucent star
Of Somebody that sings and breathes elsewhere.

VISION

Once I went out alone to play a game,
And met two others playing on the sward;
And something sang within me with no name,
Like as a purpose planets venture toward.
We spoke not, yet I knew upon some hearth
A fire was lit more bright than myriad's love,
And felt at point with victory come on earth
After the weary dark we speak not of,
Through sleeplessness of woundings, God knows not
What misery—then suddenly success,
A vast and sweet clean earth, all else forgot,
But this one star united out of stress:
The flowers grew bright, and meaning flushed the stone;
Somebody touched me where I went alone.

POSSESSION

I've heard it said there is beyond the scope
Of solar limits and the lunar span
Some region fashioned in the light of hope,
A garden that the Master laid for man.
And there we find this phantom thing we seek,
Fearing, against ourselves, its holiness;
We that were dumb as mortals learn to speak,
And come at last this Beauty to possess;
And shall forget the little hours on earth,
Bewildered with extraordinary pain,
Knowing this revelation the last birth,
With death gone by nor to return again;
Finding the all we lost to make amend
For perseverance to each futile end!

TRINITY

I saw three ships loom dark against the West,
In silent splendor 'cross the opal bar
Like dreams, as growing dark made manifest
Above each masthead one lone singing star.

And from the first a slim, pale woman stepped
In colored raiment; looked back tenderly
Upon the others while the one hand kept
A curious jewel bright like memory.

And from the next a youth of tawny frame
Leapt as a fawn, his stature 'gainst the sea
In sinewed splendor glimmered like a flame;
There the two waited on their treasury.

Until arose from the third ship a sound
Of younger laughter and of little feet
Running adown the shore and all around
Like ripples on the twilight sands that beat.

But there the coast-guard stood where they would go,
And laughed into their faces, and his hand
Lifted against the last ship. He growled, "No!
This is no port for our souls' contraband."

Thereat the woman lifted up her eyes
And seemed to speak though her lips never stirred;
And he was troubled with blind mysteries,
And in his deafness trembled that he heard.

While the youth stood agleam, alert for fight,
Then straightened by her in disdain of harm;
And through the dusk there stole upon them light,
And strength stood forth like shadow on his arm.

And I ran down to see, and there like dead
The shoreman lay, face down and very still;
The stars were gone that lighted each masthead—
But there was laughter running on the Hill.

NE-

Will you forget the first and deep inthrong
Of moon that crowned the darkness of the height,
When all you said fell as an olden song,
In contradiction making the darkness bright?
Will you forget, now all is said and done,
Eternities that held you when you came;
Forget the light because the star is gone;
Let perfect cause make consequence the blame?
Your petals sudden fall and leaves turn sere
Where in a day the flower raised its head,
Knowing the same flower shall year after year
Sing the same song long after we are dead?
And, though you close the Garden where you met
The dream our souls forego, would you forget?

PLUS-

So love went down a black road in the wood,
Filled with the far dim longing of the sea,
For that she sought her self, half understood,
Where the wind moved like rain mysteriously.
The stars were flung as dust in the tree-tops;
There Merlin touched his fingers to the lyre,
And old time passed as life when the heart stops.
His voice shed beauty as a lost desire
Over the fallen head, the sweet face white
Even in darkness; never the red lips stirred,
But that fear rose like shadow of her light;
Love started up unknowing what she heard,
Went as a dream with raised and ghostly hand
Groping to man's earth out of Fairyland.

ULTRA

And Love spoke woman-wise unto the Man,
Warping the heart threads in the woof of mind;
"Being born thus, I live for what I can,
Predestined servant to your humankind,
Having endured in dream my thrice childhood;
What though they perish in the first assault,
I severed gladness from me for their good,
I hid my dream lest they interpret fault!"
Then Merlin—"If you die, why shall they live?
You play with flowers nor see what lies behind.
Crucify self, and what remains to give?
How may these see by you when you go blind?"
And Merlin turned to Fairyland again,
And Love cried after beauty in her pain.

DESTINY

She had a laughter one would not forget,
  Like wind in trees or far along a sea,
Such as strong men go seeking after, glad
  With hope and prayer of some old memory
Mulled in the sweet of dreaming what men had
  And heard in Dante's day, and die for yet.

Playing one day, another player she met,
  Who took and struck new chords upon the lute
Of strange desire and magic round the child
  For one brief song. The silence was more mute
Than all past glory might have reconciled,
  Except the laughter men would not forget.

There was another, God's will, like as not,
  Proximity enshrined, as birth crowns kings,
For whom she gave her laughter and her own,
  For whom she waited in all little things,
All else foregone. And when the two were grown
  They were as one, and, like as one, forgot.

TOKEN

The shears of eve are swift; the gold curl tumbles,
Gift of the West to East, a delicate fallen lock
To bring me rest from riot, and quiet the heart's knock
And labor ever searching the dust that round it crumbles.

For what alone we take it, a rare gift given,
Say not that he once lived; better, his pen once wrote
Not of the object given, but glad our gifts connote
Something of us that shall not in life or death be riven.

Severed from the mortal, still immortal growing,
The mortal fact may follow its cycle unto dust;
Still truth of it immortal remains unseen in trust,
In thanks for what is given beyond the word's bestowing.

What if this must be the last leave-taking,
Or if the desert silence or sea leagues lie between,
Let us say hands we touched, loved faces we have seen
Are trinkets of faith's memory beyond all breaking.

SONG OF SONGS

A stroller passed one day who sang a song,
  One melody of all life's notes that mattered,
Notes from the leaves we lingered on too long,
  That in the hours between he had found scattered;

Notes of still streams that under striving run,
  Of findings that throughout all quest we keep;
The sense of two hands given for the one;
  A kiss upon some forehead that brought sleep.

One song he sang, a stranger without name,
  Of radiance whence from time to time we borrow;
The stars drew down to listen where he came;
  Time was a myth long since endowed by sorrow.

LILIES RED

(Upon a Northern shore)

Where fields are bitter silence save
The trickle of the stormy mist,
Or white-lipped rancor of the wave
Against its shore; where winds persist
In whimper round their grave;

Our lilies fling a patch of red
At random mid the brake and weed,
They seem to raise each one its head
In scorn like heroes yet that bleed,
Or souls among the dead.

God's glorious remnant outward bound
In search of their eternity,
I see them as re-opened wound
Sharp on the darkness of the sky,
Or vivid like a sound.

My face is cold and blind with rain,
The wind will find no respite, yet
These flame as old songs come again,
Like scarlet dreams we would forget,
Blood startled in the vein.

I think there is a hope that lies
  Beneath this barren shore outleant,
Some respite for the heart that cries
  Through lonely hours of searching spent
  With its eternities.

This flame against the sky I see
  The blossom of a perfect seed,
These flowers limned against the sea
  Whereby our Northern lilies bleed,
  Sown in Gethsemane.

TO W. R. W.

The last toast is taken,
Closed Loch Erin's door,
Summer petals shaken
Along September's shore.

Gathered threads are broken,
The old loom is still.
Winter gives no token
Of us on the Hill,

Hill we once ascended
In the key of blue.
Summer trails are ended,
Not so mine with you.

Though one Hill be breathless,
Stark on Winter's sky,
We with Spring are deathless,
Climbing, you and I.

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